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**James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, February 19,
1798, from Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe
Correspondence, Transcribed and Edited by Gerard W.
Gawalt, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress**

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James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson

Alb. Feby. 19. 1798.

Dear Sir

Your favor in answer to mine by Mr. Giles gives me much comfort. I had almost concluded that the admn. woud. carry the project for arming our merchant vessels & thus involve us in war with France & Spain. That view of our affrs. was a disquieting one, but yet I was satisfied, as the

war in its consequences woud. rouse the publick attention, that the result woud. be favorable to republican govt. & disgraceful to the admn. I was satisfied the people woud. shrink from it as from a pestilence, whereby the admn. woud. soon stand alone & become an object of publick scorn. But if we can get right without the aid of such a scourge, happy indeed will it be for us. And nothing is wanting to get us right but a knowledge of our affrs. among the people wh. nothing will so essentially contribute to diffuse as able, free & comprehensive discussion on the part of the friends of republican govt. in the H. of R. I believe no admn. was ever before in such a dilemma, for if it carries its measures it must be disgraced & it if does not carry them it must be so likewise. Mr. A. may thank himself for this. You did everything in yr. power to unite the people under his admn. & to give him in negotiation the

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aid of the republican character & interest to support the pretensions of our country & not without hazard to yrself. But this he spurned with a degree of wantonness of wh. there is no example. He wod. have none in his

ranks but tried men, whose political corresponded with his own. My opinion is if the measure is carried we have war, & if rejected the tone of the French govt. will change, since the regard they bear for American specially when thus pronounc'd thro' a constitutional organ agnst war will immediately operate. The H. of R. may therefore prevent war if it carries its measures & stands firm. But what is then the situation of the country? An unhappy one it is true, but still better than in war. Its unhappiness however proceeds from the past misconduct of the admn. wh. seeking war and favoring the cause of the kings agnst. France, has so compromitted itself that it cannot become an useful organ of the publick sentiment to extricate us from the dilemma into which it has brought us.

I think I shall enter into the practice of the law immediately & in that case move to Richmond. The organization of the courts I such that it is impossible for me to practice in the supr. Cts. & reside in the country. The expence of attendance at Richmond wod. more than make up for the difference between that of living there & here, to say nothing of the objection to having my family for six months in the year. I think with you that Scipio's performance is not a thing for a library & therefore I think it must have been drawn by T.P. or C.L. It is quite in the admn. stile, much low spleen & malice, & otherwise without force. If any thing is to be said Mr. d. or some one of my friends on the ground had better do it, as they better know

what is requisite & will suit. Giles, Nicholas, Brent & many others hold good pens, from whom it wod. come better than from me.

RC (Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress).